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San Ginesio Between Melody and Harmony. Questions of Instrument Morphology and Design in Depictions of the Performer-Saint

The character of Saint Genesius was imagined in the Middle Ages as a historical Roman musician who blasphemed against Christ only to one day convert and turn to preaching. He was often depicted in Italian art as a minstrel with a bowed instrument. Sometimes St Genesius's instrument has the morphology of a viella *or* viola, *but curiously, as the iconography progresses from the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries, it has the less commonly represented pear shape that we otherwise associate with the terms* rubeba *or* rebec. *This essay offers a preliminary discussion of how this performing saint and the music associated with him was conceptualised in the period in question. It asks: Why is St Genesius shown so often with bowed instruments? And why amongst these instruments is the pear shape increasingly featured? Considering that the ideal instrument of the typical Italian* canterino *of this period was the* viella/viola *which was designed with a view to supporting the voice with dense harmonic textures, why would a character who preaches instead be associated with a distinctly melodic instrument? As with* laudesi *imagery, we may hypothesise a degree of reciprocity in depictions of St Genesius and his cult, namely that his imagery offered a component of idealised musical ritual for contemporary observers.*

When I was invited to speak at the symposium on the rabab and rebec at the Bern Academy of the Arts in 2023, I wanted to take the opportunity to engage with several issues that had emerged towards the close of my doctoral studies on the Italian *viella* and other bowed strings in 2022.[1] My thesis contains over 150 pictorial sources, each in multiple, detailed views, for I had desired to get as close as possible to record the details of bowed string instruments in art. I wanted to clear up the ambiguities that had arisen from these instruments having been hitherto depicted in low-definition reproductions, and I was determined to engage closely with the images by examining all the traces left to us by their artists. My contention was that, through studying the available images and extant texts, together with a new reading of bowed string instruments in the Middle Ages as having been highly symbolic of the Antique lyre, we might arrive at a new, more stable understanding of the attributes and uses of the Italian *viella,* the most common bowed string instrument of that time (Fig. 1). In clarifying the narrative for the *viella,* we tangentially open up new discussions about other instruments that used to be defined ambiguously: those pear-shaped bowed string instruments that had special, idiomatic performance param-

1 Mariani 2022.

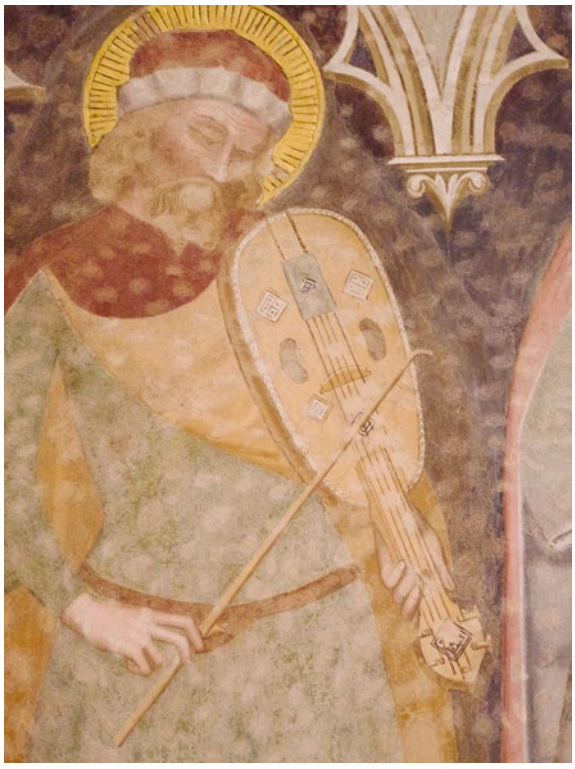

Fig. 1 Anonymous, *Madonna in trono tra i Santi Nicola e Caterina e i Santi Ginesio, Sebastiano e Barbara,* late 14th-century, fresco, detail: San Ginesio playing a *viella,* Lucca, Chiesa dei Santi Giovanni e Reparata, left transept (photo: J. Mariani, used with permission by the Ente Chiesa Cattedrale di San Martino, Lucca).

eters and to which I here refer generically by using the term *rubeba,* along with skin-covered bowed string instruments held *da gamba* that may be described by the term *rabab.*[2]

The Italian *viella* was shoulder-held – a fact that was not emphasised enough by those previous scholars who wanted a place for a 'medieval viol' in Trecento music. Instruments of the *viella* type that were held downwards (*da gamba*) did not emerge until the very end of the fifteenth century (current research on the *rabab* type, which is the subject of the present volume, adds to our picture of this technique).[3] The size of the *viella* was limited by its *da braccio* playing position and also limited its ambitus, specifically its lack of low notes: it was not used for playing tenors. In fact, it was probably not used for playing any lines in vocal polyphony. While the *viella* could have had a slightly curved bridge with five strings, one of those five strings was normally off-board – 'normally' not in terms of purely statistical observations, but based on my assessment that the most detailed examples of the *viella* in art tend to show off-board strings. I here assess frequency as well as quality – the artists that had the best grasp of form and structure depicted models of *vielle* in this way, each separately in their own style. Sometimes the off-board string is really obvious, but sometimes not, and I suspect that previous scholars were happy to underreport it. One of the pleasures of my work was to go to formerly documented examples of the *viella* and to get closer to the image with the lens of my camera. In numerous cases, this revealed the traces of the off-board string that had been overlooked before.

My organological conclusions come at a time when the historical record for Italian performance is also being updated.[4] It is increasingly clear that, musically, the *viella* functioned like the *lira da braccio:* providing a chordally orientated accompaniment for solo song as well as mixing with purely instrumental groups, but always with a capacity for 'polyphony' in the sense of pro-

2 In my doctoral thesis, I used the Latinate terms *viella* and *rubeba,* following the indications of Jerome de Moravia's *Tractatus* (ca 1280), merely for purposes of distinguishing between general morphologies and uses.

3 See discussion of the conceptual "medieval viol" and its improper use in Trecento music in Mariani 2022, p. 89.

4 See Wilson 2020.

ducing many sounds at one time. The *viella,* in the setup I describe, was the preferred instrument of professional minstrels. A revelation was finding that this instrument 'type' was remarkably stable, physically and functionally, from the time of the troubadours through the Trecento, becoming the *lira da braccio* of the late fifteenth century. Departing from former scholars, who claim that there were several types of *viella,* specifically one for performing virtuosic melodies and a separate, more 'rustic' one for playing 'drones' that spawned the *lira,* I argue that there was just one conceptual type across the centuries.[5] And I further believe that mediaeval Europeans in general, from the inception of the bow around the turn of the first millennium onwards, considered their fiddles to be the modern, conceptual inheritors of the lyre of Antiquity.[6]

After having focussed so much on the *viella,* I should here like to explore several loose ends that remain in the story of bowed string instruments in Italy. While I have established a strong narrative for the *viella* type (which is shown in at least three hundred paintings), my study also exposed some repeated 'anomalies' in the sea of depictions of bowed string instruments that exists from this time. Some of these outliers are captured by the term *rubeba* and its transformations – pear-shaped instruments that seem to have a different assembly and musical function. Of this group, there are some that look like a modern North-African *rabāb:* club-shaped, held downwards, and having a skin top. Others, potentially related to these, are smaller, held on the shoulder, and seem to have utilised either skin tops or completely wooden soundboards. While acknowledging their variety, it is important to note that each of these pear- or club-shaped types, as opposed to the *viella,* is fully capable of melodic playing, and perhaps intended for it. Some outliers, however, do not fit any particular definition or type, and challenge us either to dismiss their information as fanciful and illogical, or to admit that they capture something realistic but highly atypical, perhaps highly specialised or even experimental.

One of my most puzzling encounters with an anomalous type occurred in what was also the most exciting, atmospheric site that I visited during my fieldwork with my camera: the Crypt of the Collegiata in the village of San Ginesio in the Marche in central Italy.[7] This particular source challenged my developing narrative for the *viella.* Part of its challenge stemmed from the fact that the work itself is high in detail and quality, and is also on a large scale, thereby begging the viewer to trust the details of its depicted objects. When I made my list of sites to visit, Lorenzo Salimbeni's *Virgin and Child* from 1406 in the Collegiata di San Ginesio was a high priority (Fig. 2). I had often seen it depicted in early music posters and illustrations, but never in a resolution high enough for me to really understand the instrument. I knew that the painting showed a single angel with a *viella.* The angel's clothing seemed to be extraordinarily well-defined and dynamic, and so I hoped that its instrument would be equally well detailed. Usually, musical angels are depicted in pairs, groups or 'orchestras', so this instance of a figure standing alone promised to be really interesting.[8]

5 I argue, as others have before, that the *lira* was merely a *viella* with a new name and sometimes a few small modifications, some purely aesthetic. For my refutation of separate conceptual types of *viella,* see Mariani 2022, pp. 91–100.

6 The *viella* was not the only instrument considered to inherit the lyre, but this particular acknowledgement is important because our initial failure to appraise it thus prevented us also from accepting the *viella*'s harmonic function before the High Renaissance applied the explicitly classicising name *lira da braccio.* For a full discussion, see Mariani 2022, pp. 107–191.

7 The Collegiata of San Ginesio was damaged by the Norcia earthquake in 2016. I had to obtain special permission to enter, and I had to bring my own lights. When I arrived, the person unlocking the church said "Puoi entrare a tuo rischio e pericolo. Ci vediamo tra circa un'ora." ("You can enter at your own risk. See you in about an hour") and left. This was the most exciting moment in my whole fieldwork experience – finally the chance to prove my selfless devotion to organology!

8 I have written about the figure of the troubadour with *viella* being absorbed into Marian imagery in my thesis,

Fig. 2 Lorenzo Salimbeni, *Virgin and Child,* 1406, fresco, San Ginesio (Marche), Crypt of the Collegiata San Ginesio (photo: J. Mariani, used with permission by the Arcidiocesi di Camerino – San Severino Marche).

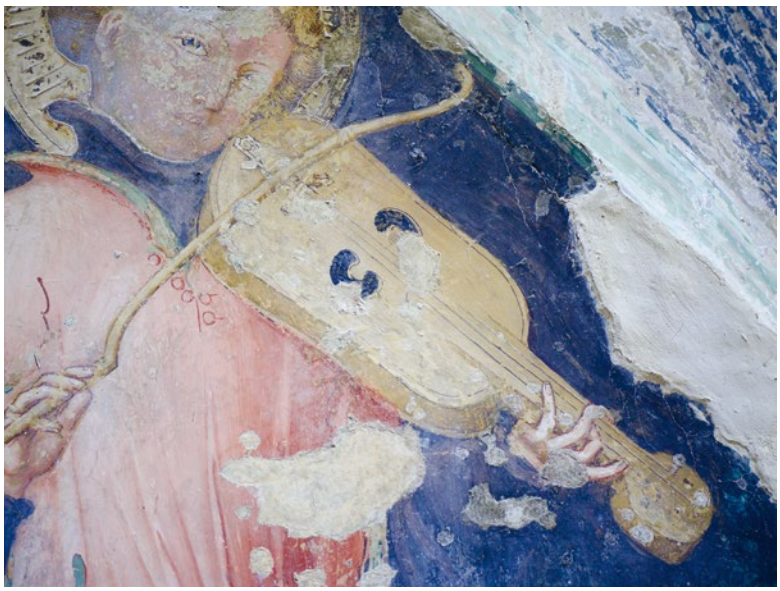

Fig. 3 Lorenzo Salimbeni, *Madonna in trono fra i santi Stefano e Ginesio,* 1406, fresco, detail: San Ginesio playing a *viella*, San Ginesio (Marche), Crypt of the Collegiata San Ginesio (photo: J. Mariani, used with permission by the Arcidiocesi di Camerino – San Severino Marche).

Upon viewing the work, I observed a few things: first, that my suspicions were confirmed about the technical quality of the work and its subjects. The 'angel' musician was stunning, with naturalistic movement in its gestures, down to the intention in its digits, and furnished with richly depicted textures and complex 'smaller forms' such as the *viella* and the interesting bow (Fig. 3). But one thing was troubling: works of this quality and size tend to depict the *viella* with an off-board string. Before visiting, I would have wagered that an off-board string would appear once I got close-up to the fresco. Instead, Salimbeni's *viella* displays only three strings (all on-board) and a somewhat ambiguous bridge, a victim of decay. When I saw the decisive three strings and confirmed the lack of an off-board string, I was ready to concede that we finally had potential evidence of a deliberately 'melodic' *viella,* as the overall setup would not seem to hinder melodic playing.

The longer I looked at the bridge, however, the flatter it seemed, thereby muddying the list of distinctive melodic attributes.[9] I began to wonder whether we are looking at a depiction of a real instrument created directly after a physical model, or whether in fact religious symbolism is here the dominant factor, with three strings somehow signifying the Christian Trinity. Or could the artist have decided for reasons of economy to depict only a 'simplified' *viella?* This latter explanation hardly seems likely, given that the costumes and the other items in the painting are depicted in a manner that runs counter to any notion that reduction or simplicity were among the artist's guiding principles. The discrepancy between the vivid character of the angel himself and his simplified instrument remained puzzling.

I turned to the broader context of Salimbeni's work for further clues. Despite knowing the full title of the painting, I had not gone about properly identifying the characters in it. I had been photographing artworks for some months, sometimes many in a single day, and the scenes in question had begun to blur and merge in my mind. The iconographic import of the non-musical content of these works seems to have slipped my attention. I was used to seeing lists of saints in the titles of Marian images, with the saints variously depicted alongside an enthroned Mary and her musical entourage. But I expected few if any mediaeval saints to be musical themselves, as music is normally allocated to the heavenly court (with or without saints in attendance), and hagiographical stories are then told in their own spaces within a work. I had accordingly passed over a particular iconographic thread that charges the image in this case with an unexpected layer of meaning. As I then realised, the musical character in Salimbeni's work is not an angel at all, but is in fact a saint: St Genesius, in Italian San Ginesio, the patron saint of the village of San Ginesio itself.

Students of Italian musical iconography from this period know how rare it is to find an image of a musical performance that does not feature a celestial orchestra. Genesius is depicted by Salimbeni in the expected position of an angelic musician, as this is a celestial scene (as opposed to a Biblical illustration featuring music, such as 'Feast of Herod' imagery). He was thus working within a long iconographic tradition. The musical court of King David, the courtly troubadour, and the angelic orchestra that itself has Biblical subtexts related to instruments, are all represented in this singular figure. Yet Genesius is given the costume of an Earthly minstrel, creating (with the help of poor St Stephen on the left) a mundane frame for Mary and Christ's

see Mariani 2022, p. 223. This subject quickened my interest in Salimbeni's *Virgin and Child.* The following discussion does not cast doubt on the significance of this iconographic convention and dialogue in Salimbeni's *Virgin and Child* or other representations of St. Genesius; if anything, it further amplifies it.

9 See an in-depth discussion of the dichotomy of flat-vs-curved bridges in Mariani 2022, pp. 92–99. The fact remains that no *viella* has ever been identified unambiguously in Italian iconography that possesses all the necessary technical details to support free melody.

eternal seat of power. The message of this work is one of conversion and martyrdom, while simultaneously and economically delivering Mary's 'implied music' or harmony, the great preoccupation of *laudesi* imagery, using only two accompanying characters.[10]

With this new layer of meaning, it was clear that the background narrative of St Genesius needed to be explored. Very little scholarship exists on this topic, none of it relevant to our discussion of mediaeval musical performance and organology. Who was Genesius? What story does Salimbeni want to tell? And, for our purposes, does the appearance of St Genesius have anything to do with the particular instrument he plays? Are the anomalies in the *viella* depicted perhaps connected with the broader context of the work?

Today, St Genesius is regarded as a patron saint of musicians and actors. The legend goes that Genesius was a classical Roman actor who made a career of blaspheming Christ, but during one performance where he was mocking baptism, he had a conversion experience. After declaring this and refusing to renounce his new faith, he was beheaded (his Saint's day is 25 August).[11] We do not know exactly how far back this legend goes, and the modern story draws heavily on sixteenth-century texts. From late Antiquity onwards, the theme of actors blaspheming, then converting and repenting, is a somewhat common one, making it difficult to determine the deeper origins of this tradition.

It is now understood that the figure of St Genesius relates to Genesius of Arles (martyred in 303 or 308).[12] His veneration can be traced back as early as the fourth century, but the legend at that point does not feature acting or music. There is, however, the possibility that Genesius of Arles was conflated with that of Gelasinus of Heliopolis in the Orthodox tradition (d. 297).[13] Gelasinus was indeed a martyred actor, and his story may involve music. However, depicting him with a bow is not a plausible organological feature for the time when he lived. By the sixth century, the Genesius legend had developed elsewhere into something resembling our modern version, because at that time the calendar of Carthage calls him "Genesius the actor".[14] He seems to have become increasingly well-known throughout Europe, because a few churches are dedicated to him in France, South Tyrol and northern Italy. There is a popular tradition that the village of San Ginesio was thus named after Charlemagne passed through the Marche. If this is true, it might indicate a prior local interest in the Saint. In any case, the name begins to appear in sources describing the village around the turn of the first millennium.[15]

Many illustrations of St Genesius exist, and they seem to be concentrated in Italy.[16] It is uncertain when his visual tradition began to incorporate musical instruments, but they had become the Saint's characteristic device by the fourteenth century. A cursory review of the Italian sources reveals a highly interesting fact: whenever an instrument is utilised in his depiction, it is a bowed string instrument. There are many instruments that mediaeval illustrators might have used for a generic depiction of a musician, even including instruments with limited vernacular use. The *viella* reminds us that the legendary Genesius was a popular performer of lowly status. The choice of a bowed string instrument to illustrate him in the medieval context therefore fits well with Blake Wilson's argument that from the time of the performance of *materia*

10 For a discussion of musical concepts in Marian iconography, especially concerning the *viella,* see Beck 2005, p. 146; Brown 1980. For discussions of *laudesi* companies and their activities, see Wilson 1992 and 2012.
11 See Farmer 2011.
12 Ibid.
13 Panayotakis 1997, p. 303.
14 Ibid.
15 Allevi 2005, p. 168.
16 At this early stage I have yet to locate any mediaeval imagery of St Genesius outside Italy.

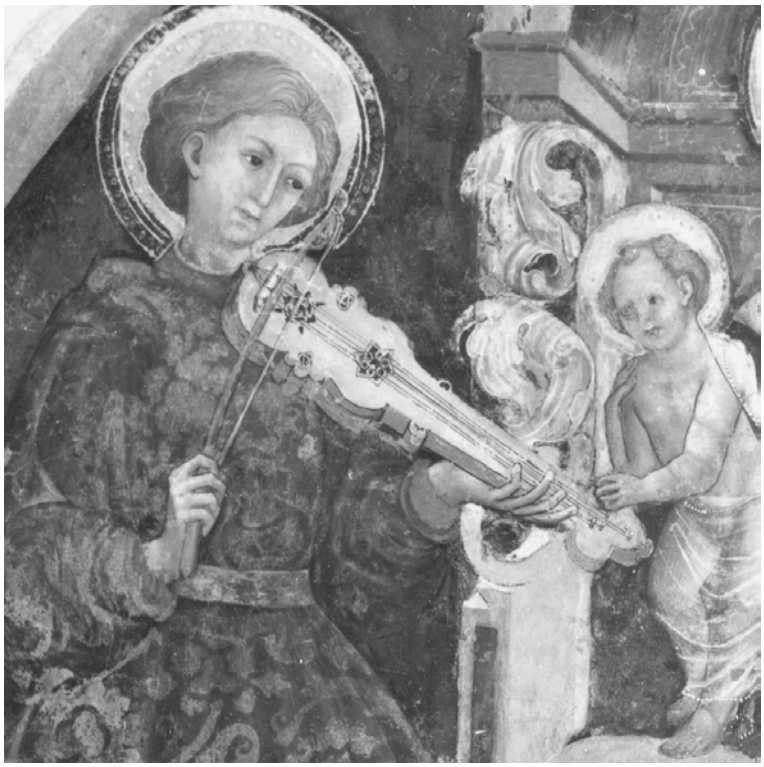

Fig. 4 Giacomo da Recanati, *Madonna in trono tra San Ginesio e San Antonio,* fifteenth century, detached fresco: detail, San Ginesio with a 'lobed' instrument, San Ginesio (Marche), Chiesa di San Michele (photo: J. Mariani, used with permission by the Fondazione Federico Zeri, Bologna).

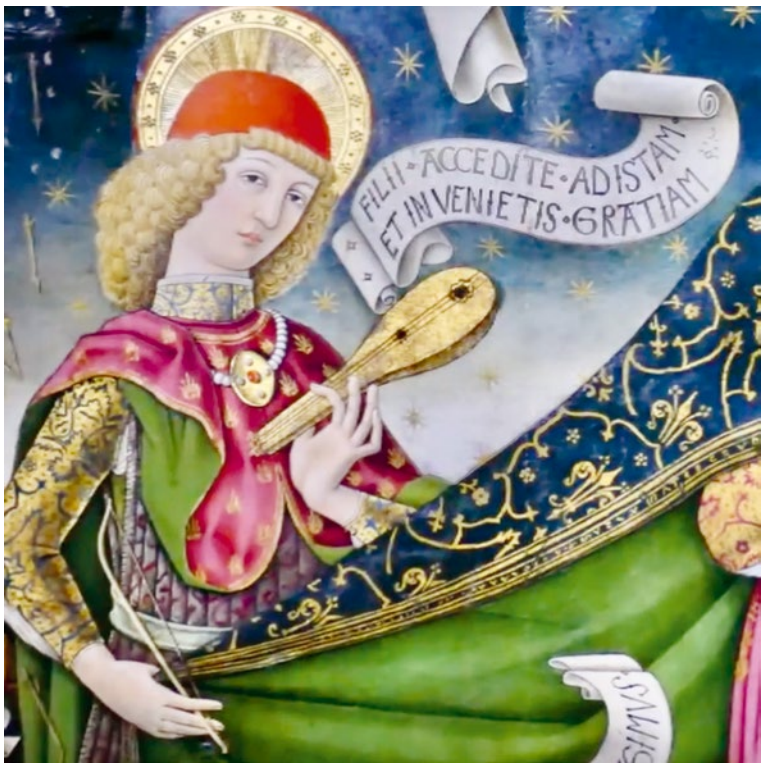

Fig. 5 Pietro Grill da Göttweih (detto l'Alemanno), *Madonna della Misericordia con i santi Ginesio e Vincenzo Ferrer,* 1486, painting, detail: San Ginesio, San Ginesio (Marche), Collegiata San Ginesio (photo: J. Mariani, used with permission by the Arcidiocesi di Camerino – San Severino Marche).

di Francia and *Bretagne* into the late Italian Middle Ages, where *canterini* sang on designated platforms in Italy, professional 'street' performers and minstrels normally accompanied themselves with bowed instruments.[17]

When I searched for more depictions of St Genesius, a few more interesting points emerged. For example, I noticed a high statistic of 'anomalies' in the particular bowed string instruments given to Genesius. The same village of San Ginesio in the Marche features other paintings with instruments shaped unlike the *viella* type[18] and more reminiscent of a *rubeba* (or 'rebec' according to our modern reading). Giacomo da Recanati depicts a smallish 'lobed' model with what seem like courses, yet without an off-board string (Fig. 4); Pietro Grill da Göttweih gives us a more 'classic', small *rubeba* type with three strings (Fig. 5).

Further afield there exists another large-scale San Ginesio by Christoforo Moretti (ca 1452–ca 1485) that also features a *rubeba* (Fig. 6). Like Salimbeni's Ginesio, Moretti's is given in great detail. Moretti's triptych *The Virgin and Child enthroned with Saint Genesius and Saint Lawrence* originally featured smaller panels in the predella of the same altarpiece that illustrated *storie* of the saints, and thus included a smaller depiction of the same Genesius from the main frame (Fig. 7). This smaller scene adds another layer to our understanding of the medieval Genesius legend and to the depth of his iconographic treatment. We can be certain that the character of St Genesius was identified not only with an emphasis on his conversion and devotion, but also with preaching, and therefore actively converting others. This preaching mode might well have been syncretised with the tradition of Orpheus. I quote here from my doctoral thesis:

> In an interesting scene by Cristoforo Moretti, Ginesius is shown on a hill in the act of preaching with devotees turned toward him in prayer. Here, as elsewhere, there is an emphasis on the color red in Ginesius' clothing (the color of Apollo), and perhaps a deliberate reference to Orpheus, as he is seated on a hill with trees framing his form. In this reading, we can place the metaphor of the Orphean 'beasts of the fields' as operating in the depicted audience or congregation, who are recently converted (pagan) Romans.[19]

This classicising of Orpheus/Genesius would arguably entail a need for him to be given the former's typical musical attribute: the lyre. At this point in late mediaeval Italy, the instrument that was increasingly linked to the concept of the lyre of Antiquity was the *viella,* which bore 'internal iconographies' that directly referenced the antique form.[20] I argue that minstrels with their *viellas* consciously drew upon the image of Orpheus with themselves as a sort of living reenactment. It should thus follow that depictions of minstrels, especially when they clearly engage with Orphic imagery (as in Moretti's panel) and with bowed string instruments, should reveal classic *viellas* – large, complex instruments with off-board strings. Furthermore, public preaching to an instrumental accompaniment has no other model than the art of the civic *canterino,* who normally utilised a large, harmonic *viola*/*lira da braccio* to support long semi-improvised songs.[21] The Genesius iconographical tradition, at least as we can see from fifteenth-century

17 Wilson 2020, p. 23. *Materia di Francia* included stories of the Carolingian paladins Roland and Oliver, while *Materia di Bretagne* was focused on Arthurian Romance. Each of these genres became increasingly popular as subjects for public performance in Italy from the twelfth century.

18 A fresco of the Saint holding an instrument resembling a *lira da braccio* was painted in the sixteenth century by Giulio Vergari in San Ginesio in the Chiesa dei Santi Tommaso e Barnaba; another was painted in the same century by Marchisiano di Giorgio in the Collegiata of San Ginesio, though it is in such a state of decay that its shape cannot be precisely determined.

19 Mariani 2022, p. 224.

20 See ibid., pp. 107–191.

21 See Wilson 2020.

Fig. 6 Cristoforo Moretti, Centre panel of the triptych *The Virgin and Child enthroned with Saint Genesius and Saint Lawrence,* ca 1460, tempera on panel, Milan, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, inv. no. 729 (photo: J. Mariani, used with permission by the Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan).

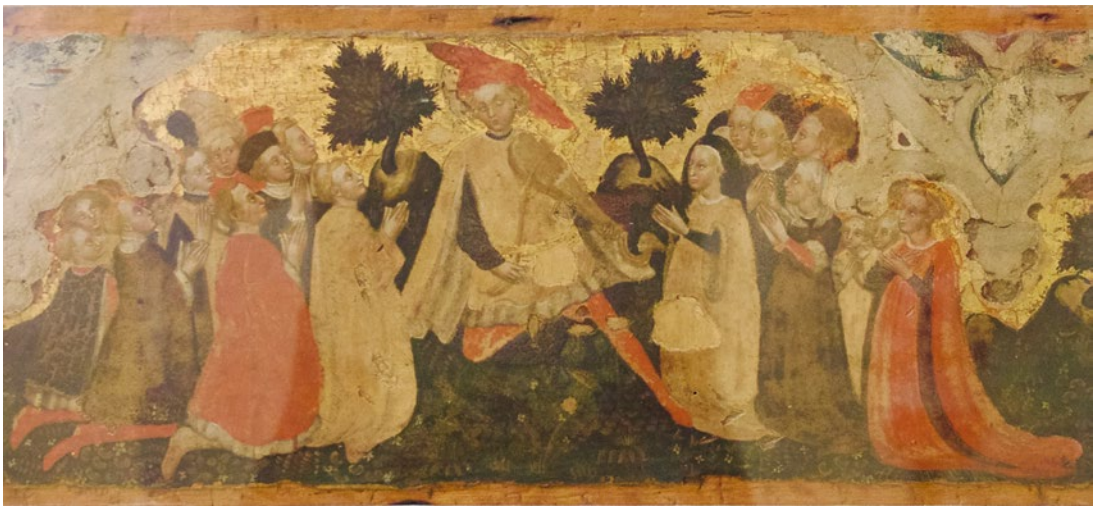

Fig. 7 Cristoforo Moretti, *Storie di San Genesio e altri santi,* ca 1460, tempera on panel, detail, Bologna, Musei Civici d'Arte Antica: Collezioni Comunali d'Arte, inv. no. P53 (photo: J. Mariani, used with permission by the Musei Civici d'Arte Antica, Bologna).

examples in the Marche and Milan, disrupts these expectations by instead importing a *rubeba*-type instrument.

As far as I have been able to tell in the course of these preliminary investigations, the earlier tradition of depicting Genesius does in fact utilise the classic *viella.* An anonymous, fourteenth-century fresco in the Chiesa dei Santi Giovanni e Reparata in Lucca provides one of the most impressive extant renderings of a 'trecento' *viella* and displays all of the expected technical

attributes, including the off-board string (Fig. 1). As above, Genesius's clothing is of extremely fine detail, and his nearly life-size presentation invites the viewer to trust the formal and technical elements of his accompanying instrument. There are other Genesius renderings that feature the *viella*.[22] But, perhaps increasingly toward the end of the fifteenth century, the *rubeba* form became identified with the saint. It should be remembered that depictions of pear/club-shaped bowed string instruments constitute a minority among Italian pictorial sources overall, so it is interesting that so many of them should be allocated to a single, somewhat obscure character. I should like to ascertain why this is so: whether these iconographic trends are evidence of a real musical phenomenon and, if so, what forces – local, general, and/or conceptual – could explain these *rubebe* in the hands of the Saint.

This exploration is at present highly speculative, but I think there are several promising leads to mapping St Genesius and the development of his instrument. A recent book by Roberto Fiorentini and Roberto and Danilo Codazzi alerts us to a particularly high concentration of Genesius images in Cremona.[23] It is well-known that Cremona played a fundamental role in the maturation of the violin and thus in the overall history of the development of 'melodic' bowed instruments. A Cremonese fresco of the early Trecento shows St Genesius with what seems to be a *viella,* though its details have been damaged through decay.[24] A second Cremonese fresco, this time from the fifteenth century, depicts Genesius holding a small, delicate, pear-shaped instrument, highlighting again our potential trend away from the *viella* towards the *rubeba*.[25] Finally, a sixteenth-century fresco possibly by Lorenzo de' Beci/Altobello Melone shows Genesius sporting a new haircut and clothing that is similar in colour to his earlier, fifteenth century depiction (though perhaps with a few more ruffles) and holding a violin.[26] What is also notable is that Moretti, our artist who painted Genesio as *rubebista* (Figs. 6 and 7) was born in Cremona. Did Cremona play some decisive role in the development and diffusion of the Genesius imagery? Was there a real phenomenon informing Cremonese artists in their depictions of the saint, and if so, what was it? Was there an active cult that celebrated Genesius as a performer on a bowed string instrument? Is there a connection between St Genesius, his 'melodic' tendencies, and the birth of the violin?

The subject of St Genesius and his instrument has much to offer. My original problem – the anomaly in the Salimbeni fresco – does not challenge the conclusions of my doctoral thesis with regard to the instrument most commonly played by Italian minstrels, but instead informs a separate, self-contained iconographic discussion that has potential implications for a distinct strain of performance connected to a particular religious cult and, perhaps, its idiosyncratic musical rituals. Organologically, Salimbeni's instrument, having a broad, waisted form with sagittal pegs fixed in an ovoid pegboard yet only three strings, presents as something between the *viella* and *rubeba* and therefore occupies a liminal space between the technical production of melody and harmony. We may ask whether we are witnessing a transitional instrument as it appeared, a sort of melodic *viella,* or whether the site of this instrument is merely attracting

22 See, for example, the Cremonese fresco presented by Roberto Fiorentini, Roberto and Danilo Codazzi below. See also a fresco by Giulio Vergari (1502–1550), San Ginesio, Chiesa dei Santi Tommaso e Barnaba. There is also a drawing of the early seventeenth century of "S. GENNESI.VS" by the French artist Jacques Callot (1592–1635) showing a man [the Saint?] on a raised platform, surrounded by a crowd, playing some sort of large, bowed instrument (Callot n.d.) – the scene we expect of the *canterino* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

23 Fiorentini et al. 2022.

24 Ibid., p. 97. Anon., *San Ginesio*, early 14th century, detached fresco, Cremona, Chiesa di Sant'Abbondio, sacrestia.

25 Ibid., p. 50. Anon., *San Ginesio*, 15th century, fresco, Cremona, Chiesa di Santa Maria Maddalena, presbiterio.

26 Ibid., p. 51. Lorenzo de' Beci/Altobello Melone (?), *Madonna in Gloria con San Francesco e San Ginesio,* 16th century, fresco, Cremona, Chiesa di Santa Maria Maddalena, presbiterio.

concepts, utilising the familiar shape and iconographic convention of the *viella* while reporting something of the auditory world of the *rubeba* (namely its three on-board strings). Perhaps this auditory world was proper and idiosyncratic to the musical practice of Genesius cults, as I speculate above.

To move this project forward, I return to two basic questions: why bowed strings, and why the emphasis on *rubeba?* Why is Genesius always depicted with a bowed instrument? Can Wilson's abovementioned claim that the *viella* was the preferred instrument of the *canterino* explain the decision to place a bowed string instrument in Genesius's hands, rather than any other instrument? The tendency towards the form of a *rubeba* would seem to contradict this, as the choice is highly specific in a culture where the *viella* was normative. Can we ascribe the many appearances of *rubebe* to 'pictorial convention' alone, to the fact that artists copied from each other without referring to actual norms of performance? I think that this would make little sense here because if we regard early depictions of Genesius with the *viella* – as in the abovementioned depictions by Salimbeni (Fig. 3), in Lucca (Fig. 1) and Cremona[27] – as somehow foundational, there is still no evidence of a 'return' to these models. We see instead an increasing variety of depictions of pear- and club-shaped instruments in various postures, meaning the appearances of *rubebe* are intentional and based on some level of contemporary observation of human musical practice.

If I had to make a preliminary guess as to why the *rubeba* gained preference, I would say that, since the idea of St Genesius seems to incorporate contexts of religious conversion and preaching, the nature of the public performer's instrument (normally the *viella*) was deemed, over time, inappropriate for illustrating those conventions. But why should the free or 'unencumbered' melody of the *rubeba* be idiosyncratic to the cult of a saint, which would likely present as something similar to a *laudesi* company? We know that *laudesi* groups employed *viella* players, at least in their foundational period (ca 1270–1340). And in fact, Wilson shows that the term *rebec* steadily increases in *laudesi* documentation over the following century, attesting to the instrument's growing use in these settings.[28] I tentatively argue that the increase may be connected to the introduction of polyphonic forms to these companies, as Wilson discusses.[29] Perhaps a conceptual clash with the auditory character of the popular *canterino* drove devotional instrumental sound away from thicker harmonic textures. Therefore, what we might be seeing here is an identification with the sound of a bowed instrument that was increasingly thought of as more suitable to a devotional context – a 'fiddle' stripped of its harmonic and 'classicising' sonic devices that were best reserved for *canterini* in the secular sphere. There is an obvious parallel to be made between the persuasive arts of the minstrel and the preacher – and thus the *rubeba* may have functioned as a conceptual hinge for turning the vernacular toward the divine. The *rubeba*'s distinctive, clear sound could be thought of as 'purifying' the practice of the minstrel itself, highlighting the difference between getting the public's attention in the piazza, and persuading them to turn to God. This level of conceptual intent and reception could only be based upon a real, intimate understanding of the *rubeba*'s sound and its usefulness to some kind of devotional practice.

The speculation on these subjects cannot make any serious headway through a study of the images alone. My hope is to find and establish medieval textual sources that might corroborate and clarify what we see in the iconographic traditions. What term would we find used for Gen-

27 See ibid., p. 97.
28 See Wilson 1992, index entry 'rebec'.
29 Ibid., pp. 164–182.

esius's instrument, and do terms change over time like the details of our images? I want to know how viewers explicitly perceived the character of Genesius at the time, what subtexts, needs, and musical concepts informed and operated within his iconography. As I go, I hope to establish a richer timeline of all known depictions of this musician-saint and compare these to local texts. From there I would be able to give a newly comprehensive opinion on the development of melodic bowed string instruments that can incorporate the conceptual influence of Saint Genesius.

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